



SOCIAL CONDITIONS
AND
CHARACTER.

BY

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Social Conditions and Character.

The contention of phrenologists who have been so fortunate as to study our economic conditions is that there are no bad men, no bad women, and they even go so far as to say that there are no bad children. Chemists who study matter in the same way as phrenologists study the human mind would be justified in saying there is no such thing as dirt in nature. There is mislocated matter, matter in the wrong place, which ordinary people call dirt; and it is dirt until it gets into its right place, when it becomes natural and therefore useful. So, there are no bad men, but men and women who are mislocated, misapplied, ill-used, and therefore ill-treated—in fact, victims to adverse conditions.

Put any man in his wrong place, he is then, so to speak, matter in the wrong place, or dirt. A man mentally fitted for some active and laborious employment in the open air is happy and contented when he can expend his energies in a legitimate manner. When circumstances make such a man an idle saunterer in a large city, with money and spare time, he is dangerous and offensive to society, whether he be convicted or not, one of the criminal classes. The same may be said, in a modified form, of some rich idle woman.

No one can over estimate the evil effects of poverty on the human mind. A man in search of food or articles of necessity for himself or those dear to him will commit many crimes or offences that a well-fed person similarly organised, phrenologically speaking, would not dream of doing. The fact is, that in times of want and hunger, the blood circulates wholly in the direction of the energies—those energies which are most actively employed in protecting and providing, such as Destructiveness, the executive and aggressive energy, Combative-ness, or defensive energy, Secretiveness, the power of reserve or concealing energy, and Acquisitiveness, the providing energy.

This is why the poor are quarrelsome. In some of the slum districts of every large town there are continual fightings and squabbings, always in proportion to the distress. Drink of course aggravates all this, but drink is one of the solaces of the poor and has more exciting effects on the brain the less

the body is nourished.

The over-feeding and enforced idleness of the rich has equally bad effects in more ways than one, the principal being that the brain, being deprived of its legitimate work, the blood has a tendency to circulate too freely in the base of the brain where are the strictly animal faculties. This would account for a good deal. The fact that men do now commit excesses in pursuit of animal pleasures in no way proves that in a state of freedom they would do likewise. We are not now living under anything like freedom, but under all the restraints due to a state of monopoly.

Of course there are what may be called abnormal types—types of head the outcome of our present criminal-making system, which would be a source of danger to society. These cases would receive the most careful consideration from medical men, who would possess a sound knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of the brain, able to treat skillfully and humanely all who by inherited tendency disregard the liberty of others.

It is always the over-fed, idle class who victimise the poor. The reverse is impossible. True, we hear of the poor blackmailing the rich, robbing them, breaking into their houses and appropriating their valuables, but all this is not done as an objectless kill-time, but always in search of food, or that which can be readily converted into food and other necessities. But to return to the idle rich. What strikes one as really marvellous is, not that some of these

custom-enforced idlers are so bad, but, taking into consideration all the degrading conditions, that they are so good. It only shows what an unbounded desire for good there is in human nature in spite of adverse circumstance, and the bright hope there is for its future when there is so much goodness now, passive, if not, as a rule, active.

It will, then, be seen that human nature is not all earthly, sensual and devilish, as those imposters the clergy, try to persuade us. Much goodness is the great salvation of the rich; the painful thing is that the poor are too good—too submissive, too contented, too docile. Another means of salvation for the rich are the games and toys which they so freely have resource to in order to occupy their minds—games of skill, it must be admitted, games that in their pursuit require the use of many of the most important faculties of the mind, games of contention and competition. With these they get rid of some of their pent-up energies, and exercise some faculties of their intellects which in their ordinary avocations of eating, drinking, novel-reading, entertaining and sightseeing, would not get any exercise at all. Without all these games and toys the rich would be much worse than they are. They look upon them as an occupation, and even flatter themselves that it is a useful one, and that they earn by means of it a night's repose.

With what earnestness some of these do-nothings will talk about their particular games, how they will travel miles in order to go to some particular

place where a certain game is to be played, and opponents to be met and conquered! They will handle their clubs, bats, racquets and sticks as if they were honourable and useful implements; these grown-up men and women will enter into conversation with one another on the respective merits and qualifications of their particular toy with all the appearance of earnestness without even the slightest sign of a wink or a smile of contempt at one another. The fact is, the absurdity of the whole thing has never dawned upon them.

Let us look at one of these games, lately occupying much of the attention of the rich, called Golf. It can only be played on a special ground, such as a public heath or common of irregular formation, or, failing that, land rented of many acres, with little hills and dales, ponds and ditches artificially constructed, if necessary, called obstacles, and distinguished by various names in accordance with the nature of the obstacle. The toys employed in this game are called a ball, and certain variously-named sticks, called generically clubs. The play consists in driving a ball from a given position called a Tee into a hole made in or about the centre of a flat grass-plot called a Green, these holes being called the first hole, second hole, and so on; the players take sides for competition' sake, the one who succeeds in driving the ball from the Tee into the first hole in the least number of strokes winning the hole. And so on over the hole course of 9 to 18 holes, covering a distance of from two to three

miles. Each stroke has its special club, selected in order to get the best advantage in accordance with the position of the ball. In order to make this simple game as difficult as possible, it is embellished with a number of rules and regulations.

The intellectual faculties mostly used are Locality, the sense of relative position, and Weight, that of specific gravity; Locality directing the player to stand in the correct position relative to the ball in the direction of its flight when struck with a club; Weight, directing the amount of force required to drive the ball the required distance. Such is this wonderful game.

True, there are many business men who play this and other games of skill, but their excuse is that as they use their brains so much in business, they need the relaxation of the muscle work these games entail. What they need is more real brain exercise in their business occupation.

Idle rich men have other so-called occupations, besides golf, cricket, lawn tennis, billiards; one, very serious, throws all others into the shade for downright uselessness and silliness, called Hunting. True, the ancient Briton hunted, the Red Indian hunted, the South African pioneer hunted, but only for food and at a personal risk to the hunter, Hunting then meant finding, pursuing and killing, and eating the slain, or removing a danger to the community. The rich man's hunting consists simply in following dogs chasing a fox or hare, and the so-called hunter is an idle spectator, the actual

intellectual work being left to the dogs and horses, not to speak of the fox. Yet these rich men speak of this rather foolish occupation as if it were some meritorious and honourable one—Yes, “he hunts three times a week!” Yet many of these unconscious idlers are good men, but solely for the want of being able to view the world from a proper standpoint, go through life under the impression that they are useful, necessary, and just. They are really not useful, and therefore cannot be happy in the fullest sense of the word.

What would these rich people do if it were not for all this toy-shop occupation, waste of valuable time and muscular exertion? They would be even more vicious than they are now, seeking more and more, pleasures obtainable only from the exercise of those two important faculties so intimately connected with reproduction and sustenance.

These pleasures were not intended by nature as a kill-time. We cannot depart from nature without injury to ourselves. We shall retain these games, but only as part of the education of children and youth, and, as such, they are most useful as a stimulating exercise for both brain and muscle.

In a state of freedom, when there shall be no monopoly of the means of life, adults will have so many calls on their brain and muscles in the execution of all that is useful and beautiful, serious and thoughtful, that they will no more think of wasting time in playing such games as they now play, than they would, at the present time, think

of playing hide and seek, or hoop and stick ; which latter are, even now, almost discarded by children for games of a more intellectual nature.

No, there will be no more useless games, but instead, the deep sympathies developed during periods of individual and collective danger and strengthened through the various forms of civilization, would then be called out, in conjunction with other faculties, and natural and graceful courtesy would be the result. Life would then be full of colour, and, no longer shutting our eyes to the wealth with which nature endows us, we should allow splendid physique, beauty of character, and rare intellectual ability of all kinds to have free and natural expression ; while nature would reveal such beauty that Art would be a reality, and the poetry of nature would be as the wine of life.



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